

Emotional Disability

What is Emotional Disability?

According to the Arizona Revised Statutes (ARS) § 15-761 (5), “‘Emotional disability’:

(a) Means a condition whereby a child exhibits one or more of the following characteristics over a long period of time and to a marked degree that adversely affects the child's performance in the educational environment:

- (i) An inability to learn which cannot be explained by intellectual, sensory or health factors.
- (ii) An inability to build or maintain satisfactory interpersonal relationships with peers and teachers.
- (iii) Inappropriate types of behavior or feelings under normal circumstances.
- (iv) A general pervasive mood of unhappiness or depression.
- (v) A tendency to develop physical symptoms or fears associated with personal or school problems.

(b) Includes children who are schizophrenic but does not include children who are socially maladjusted unless they are also determined to have an emotional disability as determined by evaluation...”

According to the implementing regulations of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) Amendments of 1997, "The term does not apply to children who are socially maladjusted, unless it is determined that they have an emotional disturbance." [34 CFR 300.7 (c)(4)(ii)]

How Common are Emotional Disabilities?

In the 2001-02 school year, 4,908 students were classified as having an emotional disability and received special education services. This number represents 0.53 percent of the 912,083 students enrolled in Arizona public schools as of October 1, 2001. Many of the students receive special education in the regular classroom with resource support.

What Effect Does Emotional Disability

Have on a Child?

Children with emotional disabilities (ED) generally have difficulty learning in a conventional setting. Some children with severe emotional disabilities score poorly on tests of intellectual ability. Children with ED are found to respond to educational models with varying degrees of success. Heward (1999) lists several categories of models used in teaching students with severe emotional disabilities. These include psychotherapy, therapeutic discussion, social interaction, and behavior modification.

Behavior modification is frequently seen as useful in shaping behaviors and developing social skills that are more acceptable to society and are prerequisites to academic learning in the classroom. This technique can be utilized to help individuals develop the ability to pay attention, follow directions, and carry through on assignments. Other techniques found to be useful include medical and nutritional approaches. Behavior contracts that target specific educational needs are essential to classroom success.

Often the program will be a combination of several of these mentioned. Some IEP (Individualized Education Program) teams include counseling by qualified personnel as a related service for students and parents. Support for classroom educators can also be provided to enable a child to benefit from an inclusive educational program.

While early intervention improves chances for success, tests alone are not always reliable for diagnosing emotional disabilities. Multiple measures (including observation) in multiple settings by a variety of people help give an accurate picture of the extent of the emotional condition. Use of a *functional behavioral assessment* can identify triggers to unwanted behavior so an effective behavioral intervention plan can be designed. It's important for the family to work closely with the school and other providers in a joint approach to reduce the effects of the condition on the child both educationally and socially.

References

Heward, William L. (2002). *Exceptional children: Introduction to special education*. (7thed.) Upper Saddle River, NJ; Prentice Hall.

Resources Articles & Books

Barkley, Russell A., Benton, Christine M. (1998). *Your Defiant Child: Eight Steps to Better Behavior*. New York, NY Guilford Press.

Clark, Hewitt B. Ph.D., Davis, Mary Ann Ph.D. (2000). *Transition to Adulthood: A Resource for Assisting Young People with Emotional or Behavioral Difficulties*. Baltimore, MD: Paul H. Brookes Publishing.

Taylor, John, Ph.D. (2001). *From Defiance to Cooperation: Real Solutions for Transforming The Angry, Defiant, Discouraged Child*. New York, NY: Random House

Audio & Video Tapes

Video and book lending library bibliography.
Phoenix, AZ: Raising Special Kids,
www.raisingpecialkids.org

Organizations/Hotlines/Web Sites

Arizona Department of Health Services, Division of Behavioral Health Services, 2122 E. Highland, Phoenix, AZ 86011-5630, 602-381-8999, www.hs.state.az.us/bhs/

Center for Mental Health Service, Knowledge Exchange Network (KEN), P. O. Box 42490, Washington, DC 20015, 800-789-2647, www.mentalhealth.org/

Council for Exceptional Children, Council for Children with Behavior Disorders, 1110 N. Glebe Rd., Suite 300, Arlington, VA 22201-5704, 703-620-3660 or 888-232-7733, <http://www.cec.sped.org/>

Mental Health Association of Arizona, 6411 E. Thomas, Scottsdale, AZ 85251, 480-994-4407, or 800-642-9277, <http://www.mhaaz.com/>

M.I.K.I.D. (Mentally Ill Kids in Distress)
755 E. Willetta, Ste. 128, Phoenix, AZ 85006,
602-220-9846 or 800-35-MIKID, or
1905 E. 7th St., Bldg. 4, Tucson, AZ 85705, 520-882-0142

National Alliance for the Mentally Ill (NAMI)
Colonial Place Three, 2107 Wilson Blvd., Ste.
300, Arlington, VA 22201-3042, 703-524-7600
NAMI of Arizona, 2210 N. 7th St. Phoenix, AZ
85006-1604, 800-626-5022, <http://www.nami.org>

National Center for Kids Overcoming Crisis
(KIDSPEACE) 800-8KID-123,
<http://www.kidspeace.org/>

National Information Center for Children and Youth with Disabilities (NICHCY), P. O. Box 1492, Washington, DC 20013, 800-695-0285
<http://www.nichcy.org/>

National Institute of Mental Health (Public Inquiries),
6001 Executive Blvd., Rm 8184, MSC
9663, Bethesda, MD 20892-9663, 301-443-4513,
www.nimh.nih.gov/

PACER Center, 8161 Normandale Blvd.,
Minneapolis, MN 55437-1044, 952-838-9000,
<http://www.pacer.org/>

Parent Information Network, ADE, Exceptional Student Services, 1535 W. Jefferson, Phoenix, AZ 85007, 602-364-4015 or 800-352-4558,
www.ade.az.gov/ess/pinspals

Parents Anonymous of Arizona, Inc., 800-352-0528,
<http://www.parentsanon.org/>

Pilot Parents of Southern Arizona, 2600 N. Wyatt, Tucson, AZ 85712, 520-324-3150,
www.pilotparents.org

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